10 - THE PHYSIOTHERAPY AND THE BODY: A QUESTION OF LANGUAGE IN MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

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Introduction

The language is a mental process where there is the manifestation of thought with the primarily aim of inter-personal contact. However, it is common to associate the language only with speak and writing and it is often forgotten that the body is a system of signs and meanings, making it a form of language. The daily contact with the client in physiotherapy treatment is able to show that there are many body manifestations that may indicate the physical state, mental or sociocultural of that person. For this, observation is a key element to improve this sense of interpretation of the body.

In view of the limited number of papers that deal with the experiences of people related to the body manifestations, specifically in the area of physiotherapy, this research, aimed at *assessing the understanding of the physiotherapist on the corporeality and the body language evident in the customer served in sessions of physiotherapy.*

In that sense, to walk the path of this study, it was required to choose a theoretical framework that would meet the initial proposal, the study of body language and corporeality.

The phenomenology, which is a method of theoretical, philosophical and also methodological, deal with several areas and came to meet the objective of the study. The method requires of its researcher the reflection and interpretation of the phenomenon studied, the search for its essence. The subjectivity becomes a key element in the interpretation of the phenomenon researched.

The phenomenology as theoretical and methodological support favors the unveiling of the assumptions implicit in speeches, using it for qualitative analysis techniques, unlike the experimental research, technical and quantitative.

Within the phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), French philosopher, is considered by many one of the biggest names, wich works portray, among other subjects, philosophy, language, corporeality and, specially, the relation body and language. The phenomenology, to the author, is a method that provides a description of the language in the field of significance because, for him, language presents itself as an activity of the body as a corporeality in which the completion of the word (sound or image) is an extension of the body in the world.

The Body and the Language in Merleau-Ponty

The body has always been the object of many researches in several fields of activity, the health sciences, humanities, social and exacts. For anyone who works in the health area, perhaps by the academic background, it is easier to view the body as biological, chemical and psychological, but it is difficult to view it as a sociocultural body and the relations interfere in it.

This body that will be studied here goes beyond the concepts of biological sciences, because it is a structure where our subjectivity happens. Thus, the person is your own body. "He is the own size of the human subject that is structured in ways that reflect their significant presence in the outer world" (ANGERAMI-CAMON, 2003, p. 48-49).

Each society has its own customs. Everything is a matter of education and the historic moment when the fact happens. The society is in constant transformation and, even that each has its own characteristics, they may be changing with the development and the improvement of society.

This way, for Mauss (1974), the body also learns and is each particular society that teaches. And this knowledge acquired by the body, allow it to express itself in different ways, in the most diverse societies. Thus, each culture will have different bodies, because the body is an expression of culture (KOFES, 2003).

For Polak (1997), the culture has influence over the body, and said rules that are normally followed at the expense of punishments and rewards. These rules determine how to act, think and feel of the human being, templates in your body, giving it a particular meaning in every society, every culture. So, although the body takes a universal character, it is influenced and affected by religion, by myths of society to which it belongs, by the family education for the individual and collective forces, i.e. the culture that acts on it.

Going back a little on the historical development of conceptions of the body, it was in the twentieth century that began to emerge schools of thought, among them, the phenomenology, which did not consider the dichotomy of the body, i.e. the psycho-physical dualism, which is the existence of a separate body and a soul and, yes, consider the body just like a single one composed of its parts.

Thus, the current phenomenological has, as one of its main features, the disruption related to dichotomies.

In this context, for Merleau-Ponty, the man is ambiguous because it has the body world and the spirit world, and being at the same time, inside and outside, subject and object, body and spirit, nature and culture, a movement that is life itself. "The body is the place where the transcendence of the subject is articulated with the world" (GONÇALVES, 2002, p. 66).

Merleau-Ponty studies the language in a different manner of philosophical concepts and traditional linguistics, in which the language is seen as the product of images or as a verbal expression of a predetermined direction of thought. For him the word already has its sense of itself. "To speak is not necessary to use the linguistic laws or predetermined concepts, because the body uses the speech as an extension of itself as a member available to expression" (SILVA, 1994, p. 82).

The language is impregnated in the body, with the body gesture. Through the word, an idea is never expressed in its transparency, and the immanent meaning transcends the thought of what the word is not a simple instrument. "The meaning animates the word, as the world animates my body, thanks to a deaf presence that awakens my intentions, without unfold in front of them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1980 apud GONÇALVES, 2002, p. 69).

In his works, Merleau-Ponty speaks of himself in his own lived body, which for him is the body that has an intent, be a donor and establish the meaning, forming a unit through the junction of the pieces that compose the body and that have as a final product, the total body. The body itself is where the senses intercommunicate through perception.

In front of it, "The perception is not a science of the world, is not even an act, a deliberate decision to do, it is the background on which all acts stand out and it is assumed by them" (Merleau-Ponty, 1994, p. 6).

To finish some ideas about the thought of Maurice Merleau-Ponty related to the body, it is important to make a few considerations. For him, the body feels, and the act of feeling comes before the thought. This way, the body, the sensations and perceptions are an inseparable unit. The body is expressed, even if the intention is not to transmit or otherwise make it reveals something. It is easier to lie with words than with the gestures. The body expresses itself in a complete biological, psychological and social way.

In this way, the body must be understood as corporeality, overcoming the dualism psycho-physical, and like this, viewed as being bigger than its materiality.

The Methodological Trajectory

Aiming to achieve the objective of this study, direct interviews were conducted with a pre-established population.

In an interview based on the phenomenological methodology, what matters is not the search for a language that is the sum of thoughts and ideas, but a language that is the *original speech*, enabling the mediation with others and communication with the world (CARVALHO, 1987).

This research is characterized as qualitative, and is in line with the original purposes of the study, i.e., achieve the objective analyzing the speeches of physiotherapists, in order to get to the essence of which is expressed in them.

Qualitative research seeks to not generalize the facts, differentiating itself in this way, the quantitative research conducted in the traditional scientific shape, which the final aims is, most of the time, through statistical analysis, reaching explanatory principles and generalizations about the subject studied (MARTINS; BICUDO, 1989).

In what is related to field survey, the data for this study were collected in the city of Cascavel, in Parana State, where there were interviewed 12 physiotherapists, who are part of the faculty of the Physiotherapy Course, from Universidade Estadual do Oeste do Paraná Unioeste.

As the purpose of the study was *to examine understanding of the physiotherapist on the body and the body language expressed in the customer served in sessions of physiotherapy,* it was necessary that the teachers selected for the survey had contact with the patient, as there are some teachers who only teach theoretical classes, which may jeopardize the answers because this professional would not be experiencing the relationship with the patient.

So, were identified as research subjects, physiotherapists who were also teacher in the Physiotherapy Course from Unioeste, who worked with subjects of probation or supervised practical activity, respecting the availability of each of them to participate.

To obtain interviews with physiotherapists in the study, was established a guiding question, which was presented to all participants in the research:

What is your understanding regarding the client's body during the physiotherapeutic treatment?

It is an open question, unrestricted, with careful not to target a specific answer.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed in full with the permission of the interviewees, in a total of 12 testimonials. The interviews were conducted at times defined by the participants and closed after observing the convergence of themes in speeches.

The data obtained through the testimonials of physiotherapists were analyzed by the phenomenological method, following the steps implemented by Giorgi (2003). They are:

- Read transcript of each speech in full in order to give a general sense to the testimonial.

- As the sense of the whole is understood, the researcher returns to the beginning and redo the reading with the specific objective of breaking the *units of meaning*, with the focus on the phenomenon that is being researched, in the specific case of this study, *understanding of the physiotherapist on the body and the body language expressed in the customer served in sessions of physiotherapy.*

- Since the *units of meaning* have been outlined, the researcher exposes and expresses the understanding contained in them. The *units of meaning* reveal the truth of the phenomenon that is being studied.

- In the end, the researcher summarizes the whole of the *units of meaning* turned into a consistent statement about the experience revealed in the testimonials. This is usually called as a *structure of experience*.

Then, from the structures of experience, through the comprehensive interpretation of testimonials on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, it was tried to understand how the subject under study realize the manifestations of the body of the client, in an attempt to express the essence of the phenomenon studied.

Phenomenological Analysis

Aiming to capture the phenomenon, it was tried to build, through the *unveiling* of the units of meaning that emerged from testimonials, the experience of the body of the client in the view of physiotherapists under study.

As the body experience of the client was analyzed by physiotherapists, it was considered the phenomena of *me-here-now* that emerged from the units of meaning, which converged in nine structures of experience, which will be presented below:

1 The body language phenomenon emerged in testimonials as an expression of the physiotherapists as language, that is, talk about the client involves talking about how his body expresses itself.

2 The perception of facial expression as body language emerges on speech of the physiotherapist as an indicative of physiotherapeutic care through the characteristics presented by the client.

3 To the physiotherapist, the body of the client reveals itself as guiding line to treatment.

4 The role of the physiotherapist´s body comes in his speech as it develops the perception of the customer's body.

5 The physiotherapist expresses, through his speech, that the body is a whole part.

6 The comprehension of the body to the physiotherapist is that the body is between the physical and psychological poles.

7 In physiotherapist´s speech about the body of another, emerges the need of respect when touching the customer.

8 In physiotherapist´s testimonials, the body´s client is noticed as a way of work and study.

9 The task of teaching emerges on the discourse of the physiotherapist, showing its concern with the student's learning about corporeality.

So, taking ownership of Merleau-Ponty, it was possible to make a comprehensive interpretation of the physiotherapists' speeches.

In this way, the subject of body language appeared in the speeches of physiotherapists, coming in with the original proposal and the theoretical framework adopted.

Face with the question presented to physiotherapists, besides the aspects related to language, emerged from the

testimonials the meaning that the body has for the physiotherapist, body as a corporeality, way of work and study.

The importance of the teaching function also appeared through the speeches of physiotherapists, showing concern for the student's learning about corporeality.

In relation to the role of teaching and training physiotherapist, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Graduate Course in Physiotherapy/Art. 3° (CONSELHO NACIONAL DE EDUCAÇÃO/CÂMARA DE EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR, 2002), are clear when reports the profile of the learner egress/professional:

[...] with a generalist, humanist, critical and reflective formation, able to act at all levels of health care, based on scientific rigor and intellectual. It has broad, global vision, while respecting the ethical principles / bioethics, cultural and of the individual and collective

Thus, it is evident the issue of corporeality, reflecting on the body as a whole part, influenced by physical, psychological, social and cultural aspects, which must be observed and respected by the professional and by the student.

In practice, as seen through the testimonials of physiotherapists, it is recovering and accepting, little by little, the corporeality of the customer, although many of those interviewed still see the body situated just between the physical and psychological poles, not recognizing the cultural influences on the health / disease.

The phenomenological view of the body in Merleau-Ponty and the considerations that he raises in relation to disease will allow the understanding of the need that the professional and student approach more and more to the reality of the clients, designing effective actions on a successful diagnosis.

Final Considerations

As a physiotherapist, teacher and researcher, the knowledge acquired in developing this research comes to enlarge my vision regarding the care accorded to the customer in physiotherapy treatment. From there, it was possible to better understand the reality that involves the physiotherapy assistance, the corporeality and body language, aspects that generated doubts at the beginning of the study.

Through this study, it was possible to follow a methodological trajectory with a rigorous method, which provided the possibility to understand the physiotherapists' discourses on issues relevant to our work and study instrument, the body.

The study is in line for health professionals who are inter-related with subjects in their worlds of work, allowing a better understanding of the therapeutic process and qualitative research that almost are not used by these professionals.

The physiotherapist is a facilitator agent to balance the health of his client. Balance that can be achieved through actions on the corporeality. While professional and teaching, must combine the science of the human spirit, rescuing all of the individual completeness who presents himself to receive physiotherapeutic care.

The completeness and individuality of the patient, if not perceived and treated, lead to a setback, in which thinking back to dichotomies of the classic

At the end of a study, there are always opportunities to explore it further, because doubts are resolved and others appears to the researcher and readers that pay attention to not unveiled details of the search.

No study can be exhausted, but studied under other facets, and that is very encouraging to the researchers, who are surrounded by a universe filled with questions to be disclosed.

Finally, I believe that exploring the subjectivity is a good way to be selected for searches involving the care in health. Understand and feel the other, certainly will make you save effort in vain, reaching the welfare of the client more quickly.

Key words: Corporeality, Language, Physiotherapy.

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THE PHYSIOTHERAPY AND THE BODY: A QUESTION OF LANGUAGE IN MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

Summary

In view of the limited number of papers that deal with the experiences of people related to body manifestations, specifically in the area of physiotherapy, this research, aimed at assessing the understanding of the physiotherapist on the corporeality and the body language evident in the customer served in sessions of physiotherapy. When considering the perception of the physiotherapist in relation to the body of the client, I refer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, french philosopher who studies the corporeality, language and the language of the body with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenology is a theoretical and philosophical and also methodological line, that, in the present study, was explored in both theoretical questions, as in the analysis of testimonies. There were interviews with 12 physiotherapists, who has used the guiding question - *"What is*

your understanding regarding the client's body during the physiotherapeutic treatment?" - The testimonies obtained as a response could be analyzed through the comprehensive interpretation in order to illuminate the phenomenon being studied. With this research it was possible to reflect on the meaning of the body for the physiotherapist. Body as language, means of communication and body as corporeality, a physical body, psychological, social and cultural, seen in its completeness. The function of teaching was also emphasized, showing the concern of the physiotherapist with the student's learning about the corporeality. Thus, this study may provide support to physiotherapists and other health professionals, for an understanding of the body manifestations and, as appropriate, also better understand the reality that involves assistance in health, providing a more efficient recovery of the disease of the person, which appears to receive care.

Key words: Corporeality, Language, Physiotherapy.

LA PHYSIOTHÉRAPIE ET LE CORPS: UNE QUESTION DE LA LANGUE D'ACCORD MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

Résumé

En vue du nombre restreint de travaux qui abordent les expériences des personnes concernant les manifestations corporelles, plus spécifiquement dans le secteur de la physiothérapie Icette recherche, elle a eu l'objectif d'analyser la compréhension du physiothérapeute sur la corporéité et la langue du corps manifeste dans le client soigné dans des sessions de physiothérapie. À l'étude, la perception du physiothérapeute concernant le corps du client, je me suis reporté à Maurice Merleau-Ponty, un philosophe français qui étudie la corporéité, la langue et la relation de la langue avec le corps dans un abordage phénoménologique. La phénomenologie est une chaîne théorique-philosophique et aussi méthodologique, qui, dans cette présente étude, a été explorée de telle façon dans les questions théoriques, combien dans l'analyse des dépôts. Se sont réalisées des entrevues avec 12 physiothérapeutes, auxquels a été appliqué la question dirigée - *« Quelle est sa compréhension concernant le corps du client pendant le traitement physiothérapeutique ?* » - les dépôts obtenus comme réponse ont pu être analysés au moyen de l'interprétation compréhensive, afin d'illuminer le phénomène en étude. Avec cette recherche a été possible de refléter concernant la signification du corps pour le physiothérapeute. Corps comme langue, moyen de communication et corps tant que corporéité, corps physique, psychologique, social et culturel, vu dans son intégralité. La fonction enseignante aussi a été soulignée, en montrant la préoccupation du physiothérapeute avec l'apprentissage de l'élève sur la corporéité. Ainsi, cette étude, il pourra fournir de supporté aux physiothérapeutes et excessivement professionnels de la santé, pour un accord des manifestations corporelles, et, à partir de cela, aussi comprendre mieux la réalité qui implique l'assistance dans santé, en fournissant une récupération plus efficace de la maladie de la personne, qui se présente pour être soigné.

Mots-clés: Corporéité, Langue, Physiothérapie.

LA FISIOTERAPIA Y EL CUERPO: UNA CUESTIÓN DE LENGUAJE EN MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

Resumen

Llevando en consideración el número reducido de trabajos que aportan las vivencias de las personas con relación a las manifestaciones corpóreas, más específicamente en el área de la fisioterapia, la referida investigación tuvo por objetivo analizar la comprensión del fisioterapeuta sobre la corporeidad y el lenguaje del cuerpo manifiestas en el cliente atendido en sesiones de fisioterapia. Al estudiar la percepción del fisioterapeuta en relación al cuerpo del cliente, me he reportado a Maurice Merleau-Ponty, filósofo francés que estudia la corporeidad, el lenguaje y la relación del lenguaje con el cuerpo en un abordaje fenomenológico. La fenomenología es una línea teórico filosófica y también metodológica que, en el presente estudio, fue explorada tanto en las cuestiones teóricas cuanto en el análisis de las declaraciones. Se realizan entrevistas con 12 fisioterapeutas, a los cuales fue aplicada la cuestión orientadora - *"¿Cuál su comprensión con relación al cuerpo del cliente durante el tratamiento fisioterápico?*" - las declaraciones obtenidas como respuesta pudieron ser analizadas por medio de la interpretación comprensiva, con el objetivo de aclarar el fenómeno en estudio. Con esa investigación fue posible reflexionar acerca del significado del cuerpo para el fisioterapeuta. Cuerpo como lenguaje, medio de comunicación y como corporeidad, cuerpo físico, psicológico, social y cultural, visto en su integralidad. La función docente también fue enfatizada, mostrando la preocupación del fisioterapeuta con el aprendizaje del alumno sobre la corporeidad. Así, este estudio podrá fornecer soporte a los fisioterapeutas y a los demás profesionales de la salud, para un entendimiento de las manifestaciones corpóreas y, a partir de eso, también comprender mejor la realidad que envuelve la asistencia en salud, proporcionando una recuperación más eficaz de la enfermedad del individuo que se presenta para recibir tratamiento.

Palabras clave: Corporeidad, Lenguaje, Fisioterapia.

A FISIOTERAPIA E O CORPO: UMA QUESTÃO DE LINGUAGEM EM MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY

Resumo

Tendo em vista o número reduzido de trabalhos que abordam as vivências das pessoas com relação às manifestações corpóreas, mais especificamente na área da fisioterapia, a referida pesquisa, teve por objetivo analisar a compreensão do fisioterapeuta sobre a corporeidade e a linguagem do corpo manifestas no cliente atendido em sessões de fisioterapia. Ao estudar a percepção do fisioterapeuta em relação ao corpo do cliente, reportei-me a Maurice Merleau-Ponty, filósofo francês que estuda a corporeidade, a linguagem e a relação da linguagem com o corpo numa abordagem fenomenológica. A fenomenologia é uma corrente teórico-filosófica e também metodológica, que, no presente estudo, foi explorada tanto nas questões teóricas, quanto na análise dos depoimentos. Realizaram-se entrevistas com 12 fisioterapeutas, aos quais foi aplicada a questão norteadora - *"Qual a sua compreensão com relação ao corpo do cliente durante o tratamento fisioterapêutico?"* - os depoimentos obtidos como resposta puderam ser analisados por meio da interpretação compreensiva, a fim de iluminar o fenômeno em estudo. Com essa investigação foi possível refletir acerca do significado do corpo para o fisioterapeuta. Corpo enquanto linguagem, meio de comunicação e corpo enquanto corporeidade, corpo físico, psicológico, social e cultural, visto na sua integralidade. A função docente também foi enfatizada, mostrando a preocupação do fisioterapeuta com o aprendizado do aluno sobre a corporeidade. Assim, este estudo poderá fornecer suporte aos fisioterapeutas e demais profissionais da saúde, para um entendimento das manifestações corpóreas, e, a partir disso, também compreender melhor a realidade que envolve a assistência em saúde, proporcionando uma recuperação mais eficaz da enfermidade do indivíduo, que se apresenta para receber atendimento.

Palavras-chave: Corporeidade, Linguagem, Fisioterapia.